

Why is My Electric Bill So High?



Seattle City Light

*Common Causes of
Higher-than-normal
Power Use*

www.seattle.gov/light/conserve

Electric industry deregulation and two record droughts in the last five years have pushed West Coast power bills through the roof. Here in Seattle, less water behind our dams in late 2000 and 2001 and again in 2002 meant we had to buy power from Enron and others at exorbitant prices. These twin problems...the drought and the energy crisis... caused a 60% increase in Seattle's electric rates.

Here is a list of common causes of higher-than-normal power use. Remember to look at your kilowatt-hour (kWh) usage, not the dollar amount when reviewing your bill.

Note: electric meters rarely malfunction. But when they do they usually run slower, not faster.



Space Heat

Forgetting to turn the heat down or off for just a few days can have a big impact on your bill. If you leave an 8-foot baseboard heater on for 24 hours, the extra energy will cost about \$3.00* per day or an additional \$180.00 on your bi-monthly bill.

Portable Electric Heaters

A 1,500-watt heater costs about \$1.00* to run for 8 hours, and if run everyday would add about \$60.00 to your bimonthly electric bill.

House Guests

House guests use additional hot water and you may heat your house or cook more than usual. This can have a big impact on your bill.

**Using average Seattle City Light rate of 8 cents per kWh.*





Additional Appliances

When adding a large appliance such as a freezer, refrigerator or water heater to your existing appliances, your electric bill will definitely go up. When buying new appliances, purchase an ENERGY STAR qualified models. Use the yellow EnergyGuide on the appliance to compare yearly energy costs. (If you replace an appliance, buying an energy-efficient model will usually decrease your energy usage.)

Leaky Hot-Water Faucet

Summer or winter, a leaky faucet sending 2 drips per second into the sink or tub means 420 gallons of water per month down the drain, along with your money. If it's a leaky cold water faucet, that's a loss of about \$3.75 per month, and \$6.00 a month if it's a leaky hot water faucet.

How You Cook

You tend to use a consistent amount of electricity each day with an electric range. When doing home canning or an unusual amount of baking, the amount of electricity used will increase. It is also inefficient to place small pans on a large stove top element.

Conservation Help Line: (206) 684-3800



Swimming Pools, Hot Tubs, Saunas

Adding one of these can significantly increase your bill. Use timers to automatically turn them on only when you're going to use them.

Open Fireplace Damper

Leaving the damper open while the heat is on is the same as leaving your front door open. It could double your heat bill. Always close your damper after the fire is out. Fix or replace a poorly-fitting damper. And for an extra layer of protection, install and use glass fireplace doors.

Variation in Meter Reading & Season

We read your meter about every 60 days but the period can vary slightly. A few days more can add charges to one bill, a few days less can mean a somewhat lower bill. Bills are not strictly comparable from year to year.

Remember: even if you have a gas water heater, a gas clothes dryer and gas space heat, you will see a rise in your bill in winter due to longer burn time for lights. If you have an electric water heater, your bills will be higher because water coming into your home is colder and showers tend to be longer. And heating with electricity can quadruple your winter bills. To help you compare outdoor temperatures from one winter to the next, visit seattle.gov/light/ddays to see a chart of monthly degree days for the past 10 years.

Residential Rates – as of 1/1/07	¢/kWh
1st Block = 1st 10 kWh/day avg. in summer* 1st 16 kWh/day avg. in winter*	3.76
2nd Block = 11-100 kWh/day avg. in summer* 17-167 kWh/day avg. in winter*	7.93
Base Service Charge: 9.73¢ per meter per day ⁷	

*Summer months are April - Sept. Winter months Oct. - March.

For customer service regarding a high bill call **(206) 684-3000** or visit www.seattle.gov/light/accounts.





Seattle City Light's Conservation Publications:

- Air Quality in the Home
- Compact Fluorescent Lighting
- Do-It-Yourself Home Energy Audit
- Energy Conservation Services
- Energy Saving Tips for Small Business Customers
- Getting the Most from Your Electric Heat
- Guide to Efficient Home Lighting
- Purchasing a Heat Pump
- Resource Conservation Services for MF Owners
- Saving Electricity at Home for Owners
- Saving Electricity at Home for Renters
- Why Are My Bills So High?
- Your Electric Appliances

These publications and more conservation information can be found on our web site:

seattle.gov/light/conserve/resident



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Printed on recycled paper.

DBG 00301 (10/07)

Seattle Climate Action



SeattleCAN.org

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